



## **For Immediate Public Distribution**

October 27, 2008

Allan Rock, President  
University of Ottawa  
Ottawa, Ontario  
550, Cumberland  
Ottawa, ON  
K1N 6N5

### Re: Flagrant Mistreatment of Students and Disregard of SFUO Nomination Rights

Dear Mr. Rock:

The Student Federation of the University of Ottawa (SFUO), the collective voice for all University of Ottawa undergraduate students, is writing to inform the University of Ottawa (UO) of two cases denoting serious injustices against students. The SFUO demands that you intervene immediately to remedy these troubling situations.

The SFUO stands strongly behind all of its students and their appeals, in particular the most recent deliberate abuses shown in the Wang and Kelly cases. Further, the SFUO condemns the actions taken by the UO to undermine SFUO nomination rights.

*TingTing Wang*

Ms. Wang is an international student in the Faculty of Social Sciences. In preparation for the winter 2008 semester, she consulted her academic advisor who registered her in the course MAT3343. This registration was a serious mistake on the part of the academic advisor because Ms. Wang did not have the prerequisites for the course. Needless to say: had Ms. Wang attempted to register for this course by herself using the online registration system, this situation would have never happened.

In the end, Ms. Wang failed MAT3343. It is only after having failed the course that Ms Wang learnt that she did not have the necessary prerequisites. The UO Vice-President, Academic, Robert Major has indicated that Ms. Wang should have dropped the course before the final drop date on March 3, 2008. This reasoning completely dismisses the fact that at that time, Ms. Wang had only completed one test and had received a passing grade.

Ms. Wang filed two appeals with the UO: she requested a reimbursement for the course and asked for the failed mark to be removed from her transcript.



The University only aggravated the harm it had already caused Ms. Wang by crushing her with its powerful bureaucratic machine. Ms. Wang was forced to address her requests to five separate levels of appeal. All of her requests were denied, regardless of the fact that she had the support of her professor.

Furthermore, Ms. Wang had to register for a summer course to make up for the failed credits to obtain her diploma. As an international student, this cost Ms. Wang \$1782.58. She had no choice but to borrow this money.

This situation is completely unacceptable and the University cannot deny that its own regulations state: "completion of [a student's] program requirements can be certified only by an academic advisor." This regulation has failed TingTing Wang.

The University must take responsibility for its employees' actions. **The SFUO demands that Ms. Wang be fully reimbursed and that the failure be removed from her transcript immediately.**

*Marc Kelly*

Marc Kelly is an undergraduate coop student in the Department of Physics. He has been a full-time student of the University of Ottawa for the past six years, he has been nominated for Science Student of the Year 2008, and he has an outstanding academic record, including several first author publications in refereed scientific journals.

Mr. Kelly registered in the course PHY4006 during the present academic session (Fall 2008). PHY4006 is an Honours Research Course that, according to the UO Senate-approved course description: gives students an opportunity to "join a research group or a professor in the Department for two consecutive academic sessions [and] write a report and present a seminar on some aspect of the research and his/her participation in it."

Marc designed a multidisciplinary project under the co-supervision of Prof. Denis Rancourt from the Department of Physics, and Prof. Claude Lamontagne from the Department of Psychology.

The Chair of the Department of Physics, Dr. Béla Joós, rejected the project under advisement of the Departmental Teaching Personal Committee (DTPC), whose members consist of Dr. James Harden, Dr. André Longtin, and Dr. Xiaoyi Bao. However, neither the Senate-approved course description, nor the official online course outline contain information about such an approval process; None of the other PHY4006 projects were reviewed by the DTPC, and no information regarding the nature of acceptable projects was provided to Mr. Kelly, despite his insistence that he be given specific criteria for acceptable projects. Furthermore, one member of the DTPC, Prof. James Harden, is in conflict of interest with Mr. Kelly. Mr. Kelly is presently pursuing an appeal against Prof.



James Harden for his mistreatment and his unjust assignment of a failing grade in the course PHY3355, given in a prior semester.

The Project Coordinator Dr. Peter Piercy has obstructed Marc's research by sending an e-mail to all Physics Professors. This email informs those professors that Marc's research was not approved by the department, and discourages them from participating in his research.

Furthermore, the Dean of the Faculty of Science Dr. André Lalonde is preventing Mr. Kelly from accessing his research equipment by withholding the keys to his supervisor's lab, without providing any justification.

The Project Coordinator Dr. Peter Piercy issued a formal letter to Mr. Kelly instructing him to cease working on his research and deregister from the course within a week, disregarding the official drop date of November 3, 2008. On October 21, 2008 The Vice-Dean Academic of the Faculty of Science Dr. Kleine then took the liberty to deregister Marc from PHY4006 against his will. The preemptive step of deregistering Mr. Kelly from his course is unorthodox, tyrannical in nature and a breach of contract by the UO.

Marc's research is aimed at understanding how the governance of a department, and how the structure of a classroom influence the progression of Physics. The goal of Marc's research is to improve the quality of education and the scope of research in the field of Physics. **The SFUO demands that Mr. Kelly's registration in PHY4006 be continued immediately.**

#### *SFUO Nomination Rights*

On October 3, 2008, the SFUO nominated Marc Kelly as the undergraduate student representative on the Senate Appeals Committee. The Vice-President, Academic, Robert Major informed the SFUO that the nomination was rejected. This decision was not within his jurisdiction as Vice-President, Academic; Only the Senate's Executive Committee has jurisdiction concerning nominations to the Senate Appeals Committee.

More importantly, Mr. Major's obstruction of Marc Kelly's nomination is based on a discriminatory character assessment. Mr. Major expressed his belief to an SFUO representative that Marc Kelly is mentally unstable, and that this belief supported the rejection of his nomination to the Senate Appeals Committee. This psychological stigmatization is an unacceptable position taken by the UO. The SFUO has a duty to protect its student population. **As the UO President and Vice-Chancellor, you have a duty to protect the student population; accordingly, the SFUO demands an immediate public apology from the Vice President, Academic for his inappropriate remarks and discriminatory actions against a student.**



This disrespect towards the will of students has breached the trust between the UO and the SFUO; henceforth, **all undergraduate student nominations to UO committees (including the nomination of Marc Kelly) are to be considered as SFUO appointments** in order to respect the will of students and regain that trust.

In conclusion, the SFUO points out that these are not isolated cases of mistreatment of students by the UO. The fragile state of relations between students and the UO will only be strengthened by concrete actions and reform of our institution in a collegial manner. Resolutely, the SFUO advises you that its support for students is a fundamental pillar among its principles and we will always defend the rights of students, whatever the cost.

Respectfully, I await a swift response with regard to these matters.

Regards,

Dean P. Haldenby  
President

c.c.: University of Ottawa Community  
Media At Large